

Analysis of Student-Athletes and Summer Internship Experiences in the Construction Management Department

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Summer internships are a valuable way for implementing practical knowledge in the construction industry. Students can apply what they have learned during the school year and visualize the reality of how construction is managed. This project will research what student-athletes typically invest their time in over summer and the construction company's connection to the student-athlete department. The analysis will identify if there is a need to propose a program that can improve the relationship between the construction management and student-athlete departments. Two surveys were conducted to collect information about student-athletes summer activity history and their perspective of internship experience, as well as gathering the view point from construction companies on student-athletes participation in internship programs. As a result of the survey, 60% of the 40 students have not participated in a summer internship before while 82% believe it would be difficult to train and work full-time. In addition, 69% of 16 construction companies have never had a student-athlete as a summer intern, while 69% encourage implementing a student-athlete internship connection program at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Key Words: student-athlete, construction management, summer internship, construction education.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to focus on the summer internship experiences of student-athletes in the construction management program and research into all relative components. The relationship between the construction management department and student-athletes is evaluated by investigating the perspective of student-athletes, athletic department, construction management department, and construction companies.

Student-Athlete Conflict

Student-athletes have the responsibility to priorities their education, sport activities, and social life while maintaining a healthy balance between the three. In addition, not only do student-athletes have to be organized and efficient on a daily basis, they also have to perform well both in the classroom and in their sport. Student-athletes around the country have reported and documented how important it is to maintain their physique and continuously improve in their sport. Regardless of the level of competitiveness, collegiate sports become fully invested in their training during season and non-seasonal durations.

Summer occupies majority of student-athletes training and has to be a serious focus in preparing for the upcoming year. Sport priorities for student-athletes conflict with summer internship opportunities that are regularly accepted by other students without hesitation. Justin Glivar, a soccer player at Metropolitan State University of Denver Colorado, describes what his summers are usually consist of while preparing for the upcoming season. Glivar explains, "...summer is not what most would consider 'vacation', it is a time to grind and prepare physically, but also mentally for the 2017 season. Getting in shape for college ball is a year-around process and a daily commitment" (Glivar, 2017).

Richard Sherman, a Stanford graduate and professional NFL cornerback, provides his outlook on the life as a student-athlete during an interview. The question asked was, “do you think student-athletes are given the time needed to take advantage of their ‘free education’?” Sherman’s response was that there is not enough time to prioritize their education over the activities that their sport demands. Morning weight training, four-hour practice time slots, and three-day travel days during pre and post seasons significantly conflict with class schedules and study hours. By following the bare minimum criteria that athletics demands, students are already at a disadvantage when comparing time dedicated to education to other students. Sherman also mentions the expectations coaches have for their student-athletes and how important it is to perform at a high level without concerns for school conflicts. From a coach’s perspective, their livelihood depends on the performance from student athletes developing a successful team. In their eyes, athletes are there for sports, and education is secondary (Edison, 2015).

David Williams, a journalist of *The Increasingly Stronger Case for Hiring Athlete Employees*, provides information about the reality of employment for student-athletes:

“... the vast majority of collegiate athletes will leave their university programs in search of traditional jobs and despite their exceptional skills—discipline, work ethic, coachability, and strong physical health being among them—will be less prepared than their collegiate counterparts at getting placed into ideal and high-paying jobs, due to the time constraints they face in balancing academics, practice and workouts, let alone the travel and time for away games.

Knowing this, many colleges and universities are making a concerted effort to turn the equation around. Hiring organizations are getting the message as well and are growing more proactive about seeking former collegiate athletes for their incoming hires” (Williams, 2018).

In addition to the knowledge gained from former collegiate athletes and employers in the industry, research finds that student-athletes are behind in summer internship experience. Figure 1 below are the results from a survey of 40 student-athletes and shows that 60% have not had summer internships before.

Figure 2 shows the average amount of time spent on sport training. Out of the 40 students, 23 train two to three hours per day, 14 train 3-5 hours per day, and 3 train 5-8 hours per day. These results could possibly reflect the time conflict student-athletes have between preparing for their sport and working over the summer. It could also prove the need to develop a program with the athletic and construction management department. This would organize construction companies that are willing to work with their schedule.

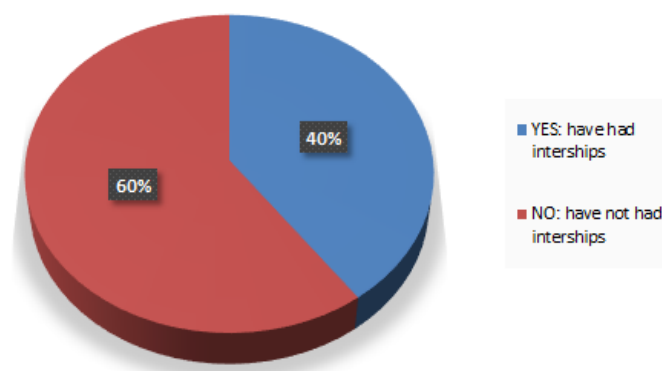


Figure 1: Student-Athlete Internship Experience History

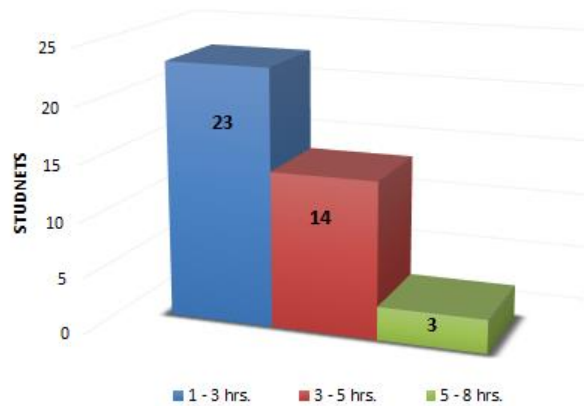


Figure 2: Hours Spent on Training Management Opportunity

Cal Poly Construction Management Opportunity

Learning principles, methods, applications, and philosophies in Construction Management is an important starting point, however, research has proven that experience in the industry is key to becoming successful. As Cal Poly implements, “Learn by Doing” is an essential aspect of education where students are exposed to real life occurrences and develop into exceptional problem solvers. Experience in the construction industry during the early stages of education is a crucial component for immediate progression towards a successful career. Summer internships are greatly valued and encouraged to pursue from the beginning of a student’s college career and Cal Poly provides an enormous amount of resources to do so.

Info sessions, Meet-and-Greets, and set up interviews are all examples of the environment Cal Poly provides for students in the Construction Management department. These programs are conducted on a weekly basis offer 2-3 days of sessions inviting companies and students to interact with one another.

Along with programs provided by Cal Poly in the Construction Management Department, construction companies are proactive when it comes to recruiting students. Many students are accommodated by companies in efforts to incentivize their participation over summer internships. Housing is often paid for students by companies as well as compensation for food and transportation expenses. Figure 3 are results from a survey with 16 construction companies at the Cal Poly Construction Management Career Fair. 69% of companies were interested in implementing a student-athlete internship connection program. These results identify the desire of companies to recruit athletes as well as the lack of resources needed to build a relationship between the construction and athletic department specifically for career development.

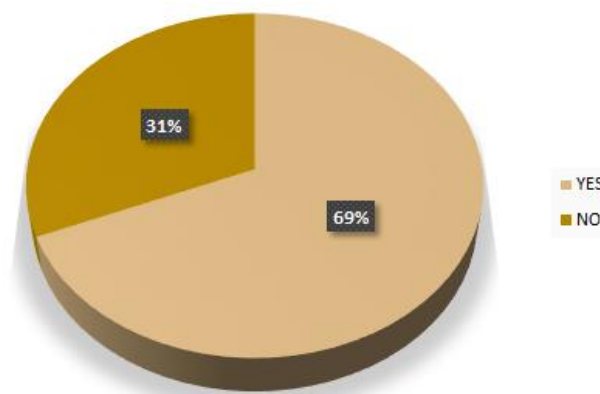


Figure 3: Companies Interested in Implementing a Student-Athlete Internship Connection Program

Methodology

The objective of this analysis are the following:

- Research student-athletes summer experiences and sport obligations
- Research why so many student-athletes lack work experience after college compared to their peers.
- Discover if student-athletes struggle with occupying summer internships due to sport obligations.
- Discover if there are companies that are looking to hire specifically from the student-athlete population.
- Provide a recommendation to the Construction Management Department on how a program can be implemented to focus on developing a relationship between student-athletes and companies.

A quantitative survey was chosen as the methodology approach that involved current Cal Poly student-athletes and construction companies. Through this, there were 40 student-athletes and 16 companies that were willing to provide responses. Surveys were handed out to former teammates and friends that have or are currently participating in sports. In addition, companies present at the Cal Poly Construction Management Career Fair were handed a separate survey. The results were organized in Excel Spreadsheet and converted into visual diagrams to easily represent the collected data. Furthermore, an interview with Kevin Balestrieri and Matt Fisher from representing Bali Construction. Discussion topics included their personal internship experience as former student-athletes at Cal Poly, their approach towards managing workflow for student-athletes, and perspective on future programs for student-athlete internship.

Questions asked for student-athletes:

1. What year are you currently in?
2. Have you ever had an internship?
3. Does your sport require summer training?
- 3a. How much time is dedicated towards training per day?
4. Would you find it difficult to train and work full-time?
5. Do you feel at a disadvantage in gaining experience compared to your peers due to athletic priorities?
6. Have you sacrificed internship experience because of sport obligations?

Questions asked for construction companies:

1. Have you had any student-athlete interns before?
2. Does your company offer any programs for student-athletes?
3. Are there any resources your company uses to recruit student-athletes for internships?
4. Would your company be interested in implementing a student-athlete internship program?
5. Would a part-time internship experience hinder an intern's learning experience?
6. Would a part-time internship experience hinder the organization of a project?

Results

Research analysis suggests that student-athletes desire to gain internship experience but find it difficult to participate due to sport obligations. Furthermore, feedback from companies suggest that student-athletes are wanted but there is a lack in relationship and communication.

Student-Athlete Survey Results and Discussion

Among the 40 student-athletes that responded, the population consisted of both Cal Poly wrestlers and football players with majority of the population being second year students. As previously mentioned and depicted in Figure 1, it was reported that only 60% of these students have obtain internship experience before and spend on average about three to four hours per day on sport related activities. In addition, Figure 4 and 5 show that 82% found that it would be difficult to train and work full-time while 72% feel at a disadvantage towards gaining internship experience compared to their peers due to athletic priorities. Lastly, Figure 6 concludes 52% of the survey population feel they have sacrifice internship experience because of sport obligations.

The gathered information generally reflects that student-athletes do prioritize athletic obligations over summer internship experience and find it difficult to accomplish both. In addition, there seems to be a tool to accommodate them for internship experience in order to balance both training and experience in the industry.

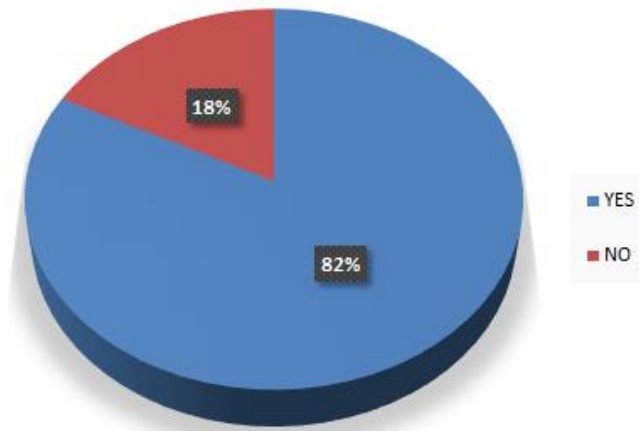


Figure 4: Students that find it Difficult to Train and Work Full-time

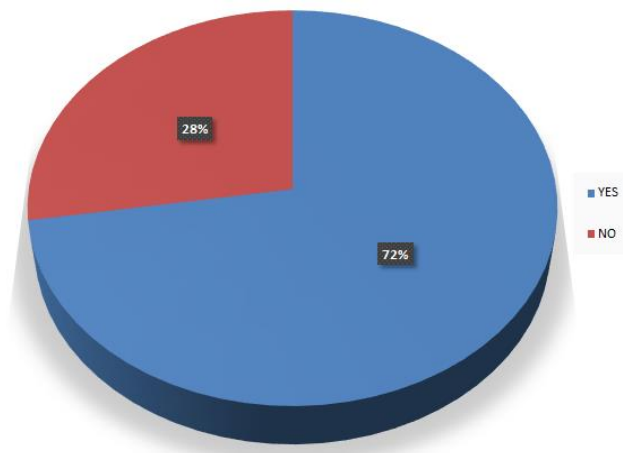


Figure 5: Students that feel at a Disadvantage in Gaining Experience

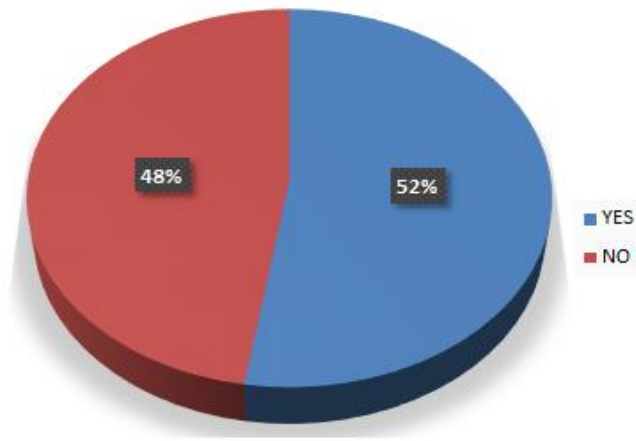


Figure 6: Students that feel they have Sacrificed Internship Experience

Company Survey Results

Overall, companies had similar approaches to the student-athlete topic with one or two outliers. Out of the 16 companies, 69% have never had a student-athlete participate as an intern. Furthermore, 100% do not offer any programs specifically for student-athlete internship and 93% do not have use any recruiting resources for student-athletes. However, 69% reported that they would be interested in implementing a student-athlete internship program within their company.

Also, 12 out the 16 companies believe that a part-time internship would not hinder an intern's learning experience or the organization of the project. The remaining 4 companies that oppose this topic explained in detail their perspectives. An example of this situation would be found with C.A. Rasmussen General Engineering Contractors. Stacy Klein, a marketing associate and recruiter coordinator, explained that summer interns carry the responsibilities of a full-time working day. They are giving heavy tasks to coordinate their needed to be a substantial amount of attention applied towards projects.

Bali Construction Interview

Kevin Balestrieri and Matt Fisher are Cal Poly football alumni that are now working in the construction industry. Fisher explained that his previous internship with XL construction was somewhat difficult because of the time constraints football limited him to. Only 5 weeks are permitted for football players during summer break so Fisher explained that he was the "first football player to take an internship for years because they time doesn't allow for it."

Balestrieri is the founder and owner of Bali Construction and gave his perspective from both as a former athlete and a company recruiter. Balestrieri values the work ethic and discipline student-athletes have and believes that the characteristics they develop over the years correspond well with the responsibilities of construction managers. He chooses to accommodate to student-athletes schedules by giving them the roles in small duration project. Additionally, Balestrieri and employees participate with the students training sessions in the morning and afternoons to ensure they are supported and accountable during the summer (K. Balestrieri, personal communication, November 9, 2018).

Conclusion

Communication between the athletic and construction management department, as well as construction companies could lead to accommodations for a student-athletes schedule. Ultimately, student-athletes would be more likely to participate in summer internships if there was a program identifying companies that are willing to adjust.

A recommendation would be to collect interested companies and begin developing a program that connects student-athletes seeking to be successful in sport and gain internship experience in the construction industry.

A proposal to initiate deliverables for a program would be to reach contact Kevin Balestrieri who is an active representative for both the athletic and construction management department.

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